

to defraud the system in these manners be disqualified. I do not want to see innocent people—who may simply have bought groceries for a neighbor or relative be caught up as somehow engaging in fraud under this provision.

My concerns here are not completely without precedent. In this bill we are revisiting and clarifying a different disqualification rule that was enacted in 1996, and that has, in fact, ensnared innocent people and denied food stamp benefits in inappropriate ways. The intent of the law was to aid law enforcement and prevent criminals who are fleeing to avoid prosecution from receiving food stamps. Unfortunately, in practice, the provision has disqualified innocent people who had their identities stolen, or who have outstanding warrants for minor infractions that are many years old and where the police have no interest in apprehending and prosecuting the case.

So in this bill we direct USDA to clarify that people should only be subject to disqualification if they are actively fleeing law enforcement authorities who are, in fact, interested in bringing them to justice.

In addition to the very important changes we have made to the food stamp program and new funding for food banks through TEFAP, the bill would expand and improve the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act. This program has been receiving \$9 million a year in mandatory funds and operates in 14 States. (Three Indian tribes also operate the program.)

Under the conference agreement, mandatory funding would increase to \$40 million for the 2008–2009 school year and continue to grow. By 2012, the program would be funded at nearly eight times its current size: \$150 million each year, with annual adjustments for inflation in years after that.

In addition to providing increased funding, the conference agreement takes important steps to target program funds to elementary schools with a significant share of low-income children. Our goal is to provide free fresh fruits and vegetables to all elementary schools in the country where more than half of the children are eligible for free or reduced price school meals. This program should expose a whole new generation of children to a healthy way of eating.

To sum up, I am extremely proud of the work that our Committee and our Congress have undertaken in the nutrition title of the farm bill. With these changes, we are building a healthier better fed population. As a result, we are taking a few important steps towards a stronger future for our children and our communities.

Mr. CARSON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2419, the Food and Energy Security Act of 2007. This bipartisan piece of legislation will better reflect our values, strengthening American agriculture to meet the 21st century needs of the United States and the world with a safe, stable food supply.

I want to commend the work of the chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, COLIN PETERSON, as well as the Senate chairman, Mr. HARKIN. Both men diligently worked to reconcile the differences in both the House and Senate versions of the bill. All of that hard work has paid off. This bill will ease the strain of rising food prices for millions of families,

take a first step on much-needed reforms to farm payments, and make a substantial commitment to land conservation and to the fruit and vegetable industry.

Mr. Speaker, while these are important and positive provisions of this bill, I am particularly pleased with the nutrition titles of the bill. An additional \$10.4 billion in new spending will be allocated for nutrition programs that help 38 million American families afford healthy food. In addition, there are many updates in the food stamp programs that reflect the current state of our economy. These critical food stamp provisions will help about 11 million people by 2012.

In particular, the reforms found in this bill benefit those individuals who need help. The bill helps these individuals adequately cover food expenses and sustains participants in the Food Stamp Program for the entire month. It also increases the minimum benefit for food stamp recipients, which is especially important for our senior citizens in need. I am also particularly proud that the 2008 Farm Bill extends the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, CSFP, of which my grandmother, the late Representative Julia Carson, was a champion. It is important to help the many low-income elderly individuals in need of additional assistance who are reluctant to apply for food stamps.

The legislation also goes far in addressing the health and nutrition needs of our children by increasing funding by \$1.02 billion for the USDA Snack Program. Aiding schools in providing healthy snacks to students during after-school activities and expanding the program to all 50 States is something that Congress must do.

Mr. Speaker, I am also in support of the final bill because of its provisions addressing ethanol. It goes without saying that ethanol is helping to reduce fuel prices at the pump. The prices are almost 15 percent lower from where they might be if biofuel producers were not increasing output. The farm bill also invests \$1 billion in renewable energy focusing on new technologies and new sources, including \$320 million in loan guarantees for biorefineries that produce advanced biofuels and a new program to encourage the production of biomass for cellulosic ethanol and other energy production, helping producers learn how to harvest, store, and transport biomass to bioenergy facilities.

I am also highly supportive of the bill's increased funding for the Emergency Food Assistance Program, TEFAP, by \$1.26 billion. I believe in providing commodities and other resources to States to help stock food banks. It is important that Congress continue to provide much-needed support to emergency feeding organizations, such as food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens by increasing this funding for TEFAP.

Mr. Speaker, from increasing conservation programs by \$7.9 billion, to containing provisions that help us meet global food shortages, this is a good bill. The bill is fully paid for and prevents further increases to the national debt. It expands food security programs, protects our vital natural resources, promotes healthier foods and local food networks, and reforms commodity and biofuel programs to reflect the priorities of the Nation.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the farm bill conference report. I would like to commend conference

committee members for tackling the tough issues, offsetting costs, and producing a conference report that I can support.

To be sure, this is not a perfect bill. Yet, in my estimation, no amount of negotiation could produce a conference report that all would agree is perfect. Rather, what has emerged is a farm bill that is good for my home State of Colorado and good for the country.

For starters, this bill will provide millions of American families with access to healthy food. Nearly three-quarters of the bill's cost will support nutrition programs, including food stamps and emergency food assistance programs, as well as an initiative to provide fresh fruit and vegetables as healthy snack alternatives for a generation of schoolchildren currently battling an epidemic obesity problem.

This farm bill will help Colorado continue to lead in the development of homegrown energy programs that we need to help free us from our national addiction to oil and protect our environment. It increases investments in renewable energy technologies, while reducing the burdensome tax credit for corn-based ethanol and creating a new tax credit for the production of more efficient cellulosic biofuels.

Rural America can plant their fields with confidence, thanks to the farm bill's new disaster relief program, and this provision of the bill also might significantly lower future grocery bills by speeding up compensation for farmers subject to natural disaster and allowing them to bring crops to market faster.

In addition, American consumers will have added confidence knowing that this farm bill mandates critical food labeling for our meat supply, including country of origin, and improves oversight of USDA's enforcement of rules governing meat packers and stockyards.

Along with promoting safe food and renewable energy production, this legislation increases spending for conservation programs by nearly \$8 billion. These programs will help protect agricultural lands from urban sprawl; enhance and protect our natural resources; encourage public access to private land; and protect sensitive wetlands and grasslands, areas that are especially vulnerable in Colorado's eastern plains.

Of particular interest to Colorado is that the farm bill includes provisions similar to those in a bill—H.R. 1182—I introduced dealing with the tax treatment of exchanges of mutual ditch stock. Mutual ditch companies are unique to Colorado and are organized for the mutual benefit of shared water rights rather than for profit. This provision allows for tax-free exchanges of shares of these mutual ditch companies.

Another measure included in the farm bill, which I supported during consideration in the House Natural Resources Committee, will protect domestic timber producers by stopping the flow of illegally logged foreign timber imported into the United States.

This bill will also help bolster America's international standing by helping to meet global food shortage demands. America is already the world's largest provider of food aid, but recent riots in developing nations around the world have shown that we must increase our efforts. This legislation will provide additional funding to purchase emergency food aid overseas, and reauthorizes the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program for infant, child and school nutrition programs in underdeveloped countries.